



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## THE WATER FRONT AND THE CITY PLAN

BY CALVIN TOMKINS,

Ex-Commissioner of Docks, New York.

Cities with navigable water frontage possess natural advantages over those served by railroads only. Before the days of the railroad the importance of water routes was better understood than now. As a consequence the railroads at most cities have attempted with varying degrees of success to dominate the water front for the following reasons: (1) To limit competition by water carriers; (2) to control competitive railroad business by controlling the best terminals and to block rivals by keeping them from using natural opportunities, and (3) to extend their operations over joint water and rail routes—ocean, river and canal.

The eagerness of the railroads to secure the utmost volume of business has resulted in the atrophy of most of the important river and canal routes in the country and it follows that the railroads are overburdened with unprofitable coarse freights. This monopoly of the water front by the land carriers—the unwillingness of the railroads to pro rate with water carriers not under their immediate control and the intentionally destructive and wasteful competition of the railroads with parallel water routes—are the principal causes for the neglect of our waterways and public terminals. The cities themselves can remedy the situation in part by developing public terminals for marine use. The questions of pro rating and parallel competition must be left to the supervision of the Interstate Commerce Commission and the public service commissions of the states.

Obstructive railroad occupancy is after all the consequence not so much of the grasping policy of the railroads as of the protracted neglect of the cities to provide public terminals, and to fit the railroad terminals into public organization plans.

Cheap freight rates to and from cities, the economical terminal handling of food, fuel, raw materials and finished products at cities and the substitution of cheap transfers between the railroads, the several terminals of a port, its factories and warehouses, are the ends sought everywhere.

At smaller ports the dependence of city growth upon terminal

facilities is beginning to be appreciated and acted upon. But at the larger ports, and notably at New York, the largest seaport of the world, there is no popular understanding of this fact and the city's needs for schools, sanitation, water supply, pavements, police, etc., force the underlying cause of growth into the background. Not until the rate of city growth diminishes or the results of disorderly planning become too apparent to be longer neglected will officials be freed from the pressure of corporate interests.

The difficulties of port organization at New York have been increased by the dissipation of the dock fund for local city conveniences at a time when it was most urgently needed for port improvements. The greatest danger which now threatens our national port is the lack of funds. This will be advanced as a reason for permitting still further railroad control over its terminals as the quickest and most convenient way to secure necessary betterments. Indeed recent changes in the state law were procured by the city avowedly to facilitate this very purpose.

New York is the most sought for port of the world and is fortunate above others in the fact that its principal terminals can be made self-sustaining, and consequently can be publicly financed without dependence upon the railroads or upon promoting bankers—provided the city has the will and enterprise to act. So potent, however, is the paralyzing effect of popular ignorance upon official action, that, contrary to the practice of the other ports of the world, New York alone is rapidly being committed to a policy of private exploitation and its last unpledged productive asset—the terminals of the port—are soon likely to pass under private control as have already its profitable subway, gas and electrical utilities.

I have gone out of my way to direct attention to the dangers that menace the organization of the port of New York since not only is it the great national port serving the entire country, but conditions here are typical on a large scale of the difficulties encountered at the smaller ports. New York is destined to be the battle ground between public port authority and the designs of the continental trunk line railroads to control other competing lines, the Erie Canal trade, the coastwise trade and finally the over-sea trade through preferential transfers to favored sea ships. This they hope to accomplish by substituting private for public control at the principal transfer terminals of the port.

For more than ten years American cities have been evading the real issue of comprehensive planning by diverting attention to the "City Beautiful." It is only recently that the inter-dependent relations of beauty and utility have begun to be rightly understood. City plans should be based upon fundamental community needs for transportation of goods, power and passengers. This includes the proper correlation of terminals, warehouses, factories, markets, streets, parks, water, gas and electrical services all to be publicly controlled and coördinated, the ultimate intention being gradually to fuse all these separate parts into one inclusive publicly controlled system, adapted to communal living purposes and administered either by corporate agents of the cities or by the cities themselves as experience shall determine. No general rule as to what can be publicly undertaken at any particular time can be laid down since some communities can undertake what others would fail to carry through successfully. The practicability of direct public administration is not based on any social theory, but on the actual experiences of time, place, trials, failures and successes. Great cities have been made possible by modern transportation and cold storage agencies. These regularly supply them with food, fuel and raw materials either for consumption or for conversion into finished products through the activities of dense local populations industrially organized for efficient production. If transportation to and from the cities, or if terminal distributing within them breaks down, the efficiency of city organization is correspondingly diminished. In short, municipal efficiency is directly proportioned to the efficiency of transportation of goods, power and passengers.

The basic principle of port organization is that a port should be developed as a unit, under public dictation of the terms on which private carriers, shippers and consignees shall be served. The port being once conceived as an organic whole, administered by the city for the benefit of all, there can be no thought of remaining in or returning to the chaos of jarring private rivalry and mutual obstruction from which we suffer; or of final dependence on the makeshift policy of separate sub-ports constructed by great private corporations—no matter how perfect each may be in itself or how welcome they may be as coöperators in a city system.

While octroi taxes on city food are not sanctioned in this country, nevertheless many municipalities, and notably New York,

permit its equivalent to be exacted through the instrumentality of badly organized market terminals under railroad monopoly. These invoke wasteful distribution and facilitate conspiracies among middlemen. The railroads do not profit by this but are attracting to themselves a popular animosity which prudence should prompt them to avoid, since it is now no light matter to be held accountable for any part of the increased cost of living.

The use of the motor truck for distributing and collecting purposes depends upon quick despatch at terminals, and the growing importance of this new transportation factor cannot be exaggerated, but its substitution for horse traction will proceed slowly so long as exasperating delays at terminals continue.

A port at which the several parts are properly related to each other will enjoy the advantages of industrial as well as commercial opportunity. The establishment of factories rather than the passage and transshipment of commodities through a port builds up the city. Factory development necessarily follows in the track of cheap transportation and good terminal distribution. Inter-communication between the factories at a port, its docks and all its transportation lines, is becoming essential for successful city competition in industry.

Only a few Atlantic ports can expect to compete even in a small way with the ocean ferry service between New York and every port of the world. But other coast ports as well as the interior cities should try to secure the best rail, canal and coastwise communications with New York in order to obtain for their industries the advantages of this unrivaled, regular, over-sea service.

The exceptional opportunities for manufacturing afforded by the seaports of the country will tend to deflect industry from interior cities to the coast. The phenomenal growth of the world's newest and consequently best organized seaport, Manchester, affords the best example of the advantages of intelligent port planning.

Since New York's growth will continue to be more rapid than its capacity, to organize its growth publicly, it will be advantageous even to New York itself if manufacturing enterprise should be diverted elsewhere. Growth will then be slower and more orderly at the great city. A big city badly organized is a bad city, and the problem of organization continually becomes more difficult and complicated as cities increase in size.

The basic relation of terminals to successful municipal progress thus becomes apparent. Cities exist mainly because they afford cheap and convenient meeting places for people and commodities, and because a centralized population, well served by a highly organized system of public utilities, can convert raw materials into finished products more advantageously than elsewhere. An intelligent popular comprehension of the underlying relations of port organization to city development is necessary to hold officials to their public responsibilities and to counteract the private corporate pressure they are constantly subjected to.

Cities that are fortunate in also being ports should base their city plans upon the port opportunity. Mistakes which exist at most of the older port cities should gradually be rectified and new improvements undertaken with reference to preconceived design. Private terminal improvements should be encouraged when in accord with a general plan, and subjected to such public regulation as may be necessary to fit them into a public system of administration.

Experience is demonstrating that a large city that is also an important seaport cannot successfully mingle its city and port administrations. The truth of this is manifest at New York, where national and port interests have been sacrificed as a consequence of diverting dock funds to city uses.

A small city on the contrary will be prompted by intelligent self-interest to plan and finance port improvements in order to stimulate its growth. I believe that even at the smaller cities a separate port organization exercised through the instrumentality of local commissions will be found desirable. In every instance the finances of the port and the city should be kept separate. Unless this separation of administration and funds shall be provided, popular insistence upon expenditures for city conveniences will almost invariably starve port improvements, since the need for local conveniences appeals much more strongly to the populace than do the indirect advantages of port organization.

The fundamental difficulty of city organization in America is the selfish exploiting interest which a large part of our most experienced and influential citizens have, or imagine they have in their cities. Is the paradoxical query—are our best citizens our worst citizens—either impertinent or inopportune? The experience of New York, at least, affords evidence that the question is in order. No-

where are transit, terminal, gas and electric prizes so alluring and since the Interstate Commerce Commission has restrained the exploitation of railroad stockholders, the attention of speculative promoters has naturally turned to the exploitation of the communal rights and privileges of the cities. New York has fallen an easy prey to such machinations and her present plight should serve as a warning to other cities.